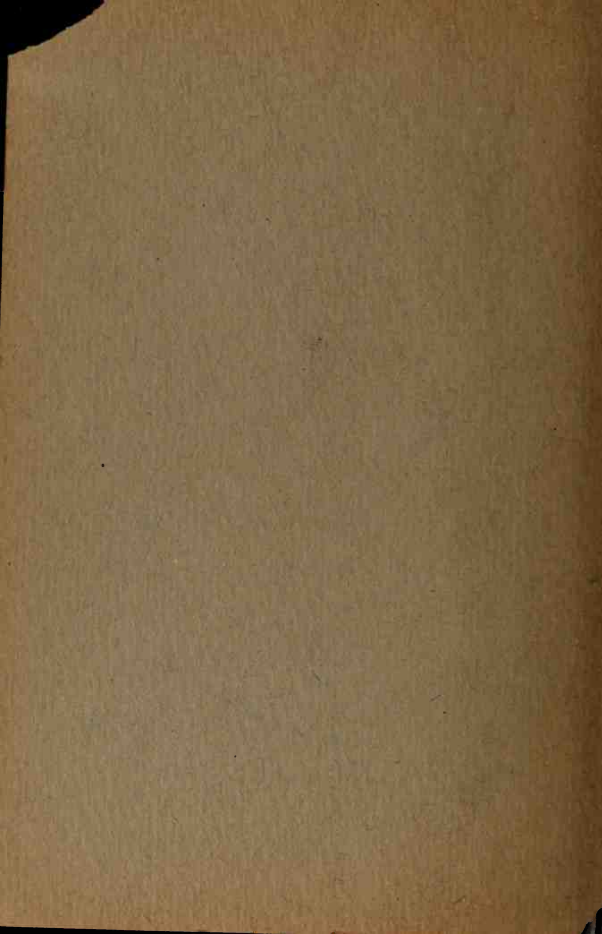


LITTLE BLUE BOOK NO. 200
Edited by E. Haldeman-Julius

The Ignorant Philosopher

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THE IGNORANT PHILOSOPHER

I. THE FIRST DOUBT.

Who art thou? From whence dost thou come? What is thy employment? What will become of thee? These are questions that should be put to every being in the universe, but to which no one replies. I ask of plants by what virtue they grow, and how the same earth produces such a diversity of fruits? These insensible and mute beings, though enriched with a divine faculty, leave me to my own ignorance and to vain conjectures.

I interrogate that herd of different animals, all which have the power of motion and communication, who enjoy the same sensations as myself, whose passions are accompanied with an extent of ideas and memory. They are still more ignorant than myself what they are, wherefore they exist, and what they shall become.

I suspect, I have even some reason to believe that the planets, the innumerable suns which replenish space, are peopled with sensible and thinking people; but an eternal barrier separates us, and no inhabitant of the other globes ever communed with us.

The Prior, in *Nature Displayed*, says to the Knight, that the stars were made for the earth, and the earth as well as animals for man. But as the little globe of earth revolves with the other planets round the sun; as the

regular and proportionate motions of the stars may eternally subsist without men; as there are in our little planet an infinitely greater number of animals than human beings; I imagine that the Prior was actuated by too great a share of self-love, in flattering himself that every thing had been made for him. I find that man in his life-time will be devoured by every kind of animal, if he be defenceless, and that they all devour him after his death. Wherefore I have had some difficulty in conceiving that the Prior and the Knight were the sovereigns of nature. A slave to every thing that surrounds me, instead of being a king; chained to a single point, and environed with immensity; I will begin by searching into myself.

II. OUR WEAKNESS

I am a weak animal; at my birth I have neither strength, knowledge, nor instinct; I cannot even crawl to my mother's breast, like every quadruped; I only acquire a few ideas, as I acquire a little strength, and as my organs begin to unfold themselves. This strength increases in me, till such time as having attained my full growth it daily decreases. This power of conceiving ideas increases in the same manner during its term, and afterwards by degrees insensibly vanishes.

What is that mechanism which momentarily increases the strength of my members, as far as the prescribed boundaries? I am ignorant

of it; and those who have passed their whole lives in the research, know no more than myself.

What is that other power, which conveys images into my brain, and which preserves them in my memory? Those who are paid for knowing have only made fruitless enquiries; we are all in the same state of ignorance, with regard to the first principles of our infant state.

III. HOW AM I TO THINK.

Have the books which have been written for these two thousand years taught me anything? We have sometimes a desire of knowing in what manner we think, though we have seldom any desire of knowing how we digest, how we walk. I have questioned my reason, and asked what it is? This question has always confounded me.

I have endeavored to discover by it, if the same springs that make me digest, which make me walk, are the same whereby I receive ideas. I never could conceive how and wherefore these ideas fled when my body languished with hunger, and how they were renovated after I had eaten.

I discovered such a wide difference between thought and nourishment, without which I should not think, that I believed there was a substance in me that reasoned, and another substance that digested. Nevertheless, by constantly endeavoring to convince myself

that we are two, I materially felt that I was only one; and this contradiction gave me infinite pain.

I have asked some of my own likenesses who cultivate the earth, our common mother, with great industry, if they felt that they were two? if they had discovered by their philosophy, that they possessed within them an immortal substance, and nevertheless formed of nothing, existing without extent, acting upon their nerves, without touching them, sent expressly into them six weeks after their conception? They thought that I was jesting, and pursued the cultivation of their land without making me a reply.

IV. IS IT NECESSARY FOR ME TO KNOW?

Finding then that a prodigious number of men had not even the slightest idea of the difficulties that disturbed me, and had no doubts of what is taught in schools, of being in general, matter and spirit, etc., finding that they often ridiculed my desire of being acquainted with these things; I suspected that it was not in the least necessary that we should know them: I imagined that nature has given to every being a portion that is proper for him; and I thought those things which we could not attain, did not belong to us. But notwithstanding this despair, I cannot divest myself of a desire of being instructed; and my baffled curiosity is ever insatiable.

V. ARISTOTLE, DESCARTES AND GASSENDI.

Aristotle begins by saying, that incredulity is the source of wisdom; Descartes has carried this sentiment still farther, and they have both taught me to believe nothing they say. This Descartes, particularly, after pretending to doubt, speaks in such an affirmative manner of what he does not understand; he is sure of the fact, when he is grossly mistaken in physics; he has built such an imaginary world; his whirlwinds and three elements are so prodigiously ridiculous, that I ought to suspect everything he says upon the soul, after he has imposed upon me with respect to bodies.

He believes, or affects to believe, that we are born with metaphysical ideas. I would as soon aver that Homer was born with the Iliad in his head. It is very true, that Homer, at his birth, had a brain so constructed, that having afterwards acquired poetical ideas, sometimes fine, sometimes incoherent, or sometimes exaggerated, he at length composed the Iliad. We bring into the world at our birth the seed of what afterwards displays itself in us; but we have really no more innate ideas than Raphael and Michael Angelo had at their birth pencils and colors.

Descartes endeavors to unite his scattered chimeras, by supposing men always to think; I would as soon imagine that birds never cease flying, or dogs running, because they are endowed with these abilities.

We need only consult a little of our experience and that of human nature, to be thoroughly convinced of the contrary; there is no man mad enough to firmly believe he has thought all his life, night and day, without interruption, from the time of his being a foetus till his last illness. The only resource of those who have defended such a romance has been to say that we always think, but we do not always perceive that we think. It might be as well asserted, that we drink, eat, and ride on horseback without knowing it. If you don't perceive that you possess any ideas, how can you affirm that you have any? Gassendi ridiculed this extravagant system as it deserved. Do you know what was the consequence? Gassendi and Descartes were pronounced atheists.

VI. BEASTS.

Man being supposed to have continually possessed ideas, perceptions, and conceptions, it naturally follows, that beasts were likewise always in possession of them; for it is incontestable that a hunting dog has the idea of the master he obeys, and of the game that he brings him. It is evident that he has memory, and that he combines some ideas. Thus then if the thought of man be the essence of his soul, that of the dog is the essence of his soul, and if man had always ideas, animals must necessarily have had them also. To remove this difficulty, the manufacturer or

whirlwinds and chamfered matter dared to say, that beasts were pure machines, who sought for food without appetite, who had constantly had the organs of sensation without ever having the least sensation, who cried without pain, who testified joy without pleasure, who possessed a brain incapable of receiving the slightest idea, and who were therefore a perpetual contradiction.

This system was as ridiculous as the other; but instead of exposing extravagance, it was treated as impious. It was pretended that this system was repugnant to the Holy Scriptures, which says in Genesis, "And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it;" which manifestly supposes in beasts a knowledge of, and acquaintance with, good and evil

VII. EXPERIENCE.

Let us never introduce the Holy Scriptures into our philosophical disputes; these are things too heterogeneous, and which have no relation to it. The point here is to examine what we can know by ourselves, and this is reduced to a very narrow compass. We must give up all pretensions to common sense not to agree, that we know nothing in the world but by experience, and by a succession of groping and long reflection, that we obtain some feeble and slight ideas of body, of space, time, infinity, and God himself; it would not be worth while for the author of nature to put

these ideas into the brain of every foetus, in order that only a very small number of men should make use of them

We are all, with respect to the objects of our knowledge, like the ignorant lovers Daphnis and Chloe, whose amours and innocence Longus has depicted. They required much time to learn how to satisfy their desires, they having no experience. The same thing happened to the emperor Leopold, and to a son of Louis XIV.; it was necessary to instruct them. If they had been born with innate ideas, we should believe that nature would not have refused them the knowledge necessary for the preservation of the human species.

VIII. SUBSTANCE.

As we can have no notion, but by experience, it is not impossible that we can ever know what matter is. We touch, we see the properties of this substance; but this very expression "substance which is beneath," sufficiently acquaints us that this thing beneath will ever be unknown to us; whatever we may discover of its appearance, there will always remain this beneath to discover. For the same reason, we can never know by ourselves what is spirit. It is a word which usually signifies breath, and by which we endeavor to express vaguely and grossly that which gives us thoughts. But when, even by a prodigy, which is not to be supposed, we should acquire some slight idea of the substance of this spirit, we

should be no farther advanced; and we could never guess how this substance received sentiments and thoughts. We know very well that we have some small intellectual faculty; but how do we obtain it? This is a secret of nature, which she has not divulged to any mortal.

IX. NARROW LIMITS.

Our intellects are confined as well as the strength of our body. Some men are more robust than others; there are also Hercules' with respect to thought; but, at the bottom, this superiority is a very trivial thing. One shall lift ten times as much matter as myself; another can do in his head and without paper, a division of fifteen figures, whilst I can only divide three or four, with much difficulty; here then is the extent of that vaunted strength; its limits are very confined; and therefore in games of combination, no man after having trained himself with great application and long practice, will, with all his efforts, get beyond that degree of perfection allotted him: this is the goal of his intellect. It is absolutely necessary that it should be so, otherwise we should gradually go on to infinity.

X. IMPOSSIBLE DISCOVERIES.

In this narrow circle by which we are circumscribed, let us see what we are condemned

to be ignorant of, and what we gain a little knowledge of. We have already found, that no first resource, no first principle, can be traced by us.

Why does my arm obey my will? We are so accustomed to this incomprehensible phenomenon, that very few pay attention to it; and when we want to trace the cause of so common an effect, we find that there is infinity between our will and the obedience of our limb; that is to say, there is no proportion between them, no reason, no apparent cause; and we feel that we might think of eternity, without being able to discover the least glimpse of probability.

XI. THE FOUNDATION OF DESPAIR.

Thus stopped at the very first onset, and vainly relying upon ourselves, we are dismayed from seeking after ourselves, as we can never discover ourselves. To ourselves we are inexplicable.

We know pretty nearly, with the assistance of triangles, that the sun and earth are about thirty millions of geometrical miles distant; but what is the sun? and wherefore does it turn upon its axis? and why in one sense more than another? and why do Saturn and we revolve round this planet sooner from west to east than from east to west? This question will not only ever remain unsatisfied, but

we shall never discover the least possibility to devise a physical cause of it. Wherefore? because the first knot of this difficulty is in the principle of things.

It is the same with respect to what acts within us, as to what actuates the immense spaces of nature. There is in the arrangement of the planets, and in the formation of a hand-worm, and of man, a first principle, the avenue to which must necessarily be barred against us. For if we could be acquainted with the cause of our first origin, we should be its masters, we should be gods. Let us illustrate this idea, and see if it be just.

Suppose that we found, in effect, the cause of our sensations, of our thoughts, and our motions, as we have only discovered in the planets the reason of eclipses and of the different phases of the moon and Venus; it is evident we could then foretell our sensations, our thoughts, and our desires resulting from these sensations, as we predict the phases and the eclipses. Being then acquainted with what would happen to-morrow within us, we should clearly see by the play of this machine, whether we should be affected in a fatal or auspicious manner. We have, it is agreed, a will that directs our interior motions in various circumstances. For example, I find myself disposed to wrath, my reflection and will suppress its growing exhibition; I shall see if I know my first principles, all the affections to which I am disposed for tomorrow, all the successive ideas that wait for me; I could have the same

power over this succession of ideas and sentiments, as I sometimes exert over actual sentiments and thoughts, which I divert and repress. I should find myself precisely in the same case with every man who can retard and accelerate, according to his will, the motion of a watch, a ship, or any other well-known machine.

Being master of the ideas that are destined for me tomorrow, I should be also of those for the following day, and even the remainder of my life; I could then be ever powerful over myself. I should be the God of myself. I am very sensible that this state is incompatible with my nature; it is therefore impossible that I can know anything of the first principle which makes me think and act.

XII. DOUBT.

Is that which is impossible for my weak limited nature of so short a duration, equally impossible in other globes, in other species of beings? Are there any superior intelligences, masters of all their ideas, who think and feel all that they choose? I know nothing of the matter; I am only acquainted with my own weakness, I have no idea of the powers of others.

XIII. AM I FREE.

Let us not yet quit the circle of our existence; let us examine ourselves as far as we

are able. I remember one day before I had put all the foregoing questions, a reasoner wanted to make me reason. He asked me if I was free? I replied that I was not in prison, that I had the key of my chamber, that I was perfectly free. That is not what I ask you, he replied, do you believe your will is at liberty of disposing or not disposing you to throw yourself out of the window? Do you think with the scholastic angel that the free agent is an appetitive power, and the free agent is lost by sin? I fixed my eyes upon the querist, in order to read in his, if he was not out of his mind; and I answered, that I did not understand the least of his gibberish.

Nevertheless, this question, upon the freedom of man, greatly interested me; I read scholastics, and, like them, I was in the dark; I read Locke, and I discovered some rays of light; I read Collin's treatise, which appeared to me an improvement upon Locke; and I have never read anything since that has given me additional instruction. This is what my weak reason hath conceived, with the assistance of these two great men, the only two, who have, in my opinion, understood themselves in writing upon this subject, and the only two who have made themselves understood to others.

There is nothing without a cause. An effect without a cause, are words without meaning. Every time that I have a will, this can only be in consequence of my judgment, good or bad; this judgment is necessary, consequently, so is my will. In effect, it would be very

singular that all nature, all the planets, should obey eternal laws, and that there should be a little animal five feet high, who, in contempt of these laws, could act as he pleased, solely according to his caprice. He would act by chance; and we know that chance is nothing. We have invented this word to express the known effect of all unknown causes.

My ideas necessarily enter into my brain. how then can my will, which depends upon them, be free? I feel upon various occasions, that this will is not free; thus when I am overwhelmed with illness, when I am transported with passion, when my judgment cannot comprehend objects that present themselves to me, etc. I should think, therefore, that the laws of nature being always the same, my will is not more free in things that appear to me the most indifferent, than in those in which I find myself compelled by an invincible force.

To be really free is to have power. My liberty consists in doing what I choose: but I must necessarily choose what I will; otherwise it would be without reason, without cause, which is impossible. My liberty consists in walking when I have a mind to walk, and I have not the gout.

My liberty consists in not doing a bad action when my mind necessarily represents it as a bad action; to subdue a passion, when my mind points out to me the danger of it, and the horror of the act powerfully combats my desire. We may suppress our passions

(as I have already said, No. IV.) but then we are not freer in suppressing our desires, than by letting ourselves be carried away by our inclination; for in both cases, we irresistibly pursue our last idea; and this last is necessary: wherefore I necessarily perform what this dictates to me. It is strange that men should not be content with this measure of liberty, that is to say, the power which they have received from nature of doing what they choose; the planets have it not; we possess it, and our pride makes us sometimes believe that we possess still more. We figure to ourselves that we have the incomprehensible and absurd gift of election, without reason, without any other motive than that of free-will. See No. XXIX.

No, I cannot forgive Dr. Clarke for having sophistically opposed these truths, the force of which he felt, but which did not well agree with his systems. No, it is not allowed to such a philosopher as him to attack Collins as a sophist, by changing the state of the question, and reproaching Collins with calling man "a necessary agent." Agent or patient, what doth it signify? An agent when he voluntarily moves, a patient when he receives ideas. What doth the name to the thing? Man is in everything a dependent being, as nature is throughout dependent, and he cannot be excepted from other beings.

The preacher in Samuel Clarke stifles the philosopher; he distinguishes the physical from the moral necessity. And what is a

moral necessity? It appears probable to you that a queen of England, whose coronation ceremony is performed in a church, will not cast off her regal robes to throw herself quite naked upon the altar, though a similar adventure is related of a queen of Congo. You call this a moral necessity in a queen of our climate; but it is at the bottom, a physical and eternal necessity, blended with the constitution of things. It is as certain this queen will not be guilty of such a folly, as that she will one day die. Moral necessity is but a phase: all that is done is absolutely necessary. There is no medium between necessity and chance; and you know there is no chance: wherefore all that happens is necessary?

To embarrass the thing still more, it has been devised to distinguish again between necessity and constraint; but constraint, in fact, is nothing but necessity that is perceived, and necessity is a constraint, that is unperceived. Archimedes is equally necessitated to remain in his chamber when shut in, as when he is deeply engaged with a problem, and the idea of going out does not occur to him.

Ducunt volentem fata, nolentum trahunt.

The ignoramus who thinks in this manner, did not always think the same; but he is at length compelled to yield.

XVI. IS EVERY THING ETERNAL?

Subject to eternal laws like every sphere that replenishes space, as the elements, animals,

and plants, I view with astonishment every thing that surrounds me; I search for my author, and the author of that immense machine, of which I am scarce a perceptible wheel.

I am not derived from nothing; for the substance of my father and mother, who bore me nine months in her womb, is something. It is evident to me that the sperm which produced me, could not be produced from nothing; for how can nothing produce existence? I find myself subdued by this maxim of all antiquity, "nothing arises from naught, nothing can return to naught."

This axiom carries with it such dreadful power, that it bears down all my understanding, without my being able to contend with it. No philosopher has ever lost sight of it. No legislator whatsoever has contested it. The Cahut of the Phoenicians, the Chaos of the Greeks, the Tohu-bohu of the Chaldeans and the Hebrews, all evince that the eternity of matter has ever been believed. My reason, perhaps, deceived by so ancient and general an idea, tells me—matter must necessarily be eternal, because it exists: if it was in being yesterday, it was before.

I cannot perceive any probability of its having begun to be, any cause why it had not been, any cause wherefore it received existence at one time more than at another. I therefore yield to this conviction, whether well or ill founded, and I list myself under the banner of the whole world, till such time as

having some progress in my researches, I discover a luminary superior to the judgment of all mankind, which compels me to retract against my will.

But if, according to the opinion of so many philosophers of antiquity, the eternal being has always acted, what becomes of the Cahut and Erebus of the Phoenicians, the Tohu-bohu of the Chaldeans, the Chaos of Hesiod? they will remain fables. Chaos is an impossibility in the eyes of reason; for it is impossible that intelligence being eternal, there should ever have been anything contrary to the laws of that intelligence: now the Chaos is precisely contrary to all the laws of nature. Enter into the most horrid caverns of the Alps, under those ruins of rocks, ice, sand, waters, unfashioned crystals, and minerals, they all submit to gravitation. Chaos never existed anywhere but in our heads, and has only served to assist Hesiod and Ovid in the composing of some elegant verses.

If our Holy Scripture says Chaos did exist, if it had adopted the Tohu-bohu, we doubtless believe it, and with the most ready faith. We are, in this place, speaking only of the deceitful lights of our reason. We have confined ourselves, as we have said, to what we may suspect by ourselves. We are children, who endeavor to go a few steps without leading-strings.

XV. INTELLIGENCE

But in perceiving the order, prodigious skill, mechanical and geometrical laws, that reign in the universe, their cause, the innumerable ends of all things, I am seized with admiration and respect. I immediately judge, that if the works of man, even my own, compel me to acknowledge an intelligence within us, I should acknowledge one far more superior, actuating the multitude of so many works. I admit of this supreme intelligence, without fearing that I shall be obliged to change my opinion. Nothing staggers me with respect to this axiom, every work demonstrates a workman.

XVI. ETERNITY

Is this intelligence eternal? Doubtless, for whether I admit or reject the eternity of matter, I cannot reject the eternal existence of its supreme artizan; and it is evident that if it exists at present, it ever has existed.

XVII. INCOMPREHENSIBILITY

I have as yet advanced only two or three steps in this vast career; I want to know if this divine intelligence is something absolutely distinct from the universe, nearly as the sculptor is distinguished from the statue; or whether this soul of the world is united to the world, and still penetrates it nearly in the same manner, as what I call my soul is

united to me, and according to that of antiquity so well expressed in Virgil and Lucan:

Mens agitat molem and magno se corpore miscet,

Jupiter est quodcumque vides quocomque moveris.

I find myself suddenly interrupted in the prospect of my vain curiosity. Miserable mortal, if I cannot fathom my own intelligence if I cannot know by what I am animated, how can I have any acquaintance with the ineffable intelligence which visibly presides over matter entirely? There is one, as everything demonstrates, but where is the compass that will direct me towards its secret and eternal abode?

XVIII. INFINITY.

Is this intelligence infinite in power and immensity, as it is incontestably infinite in duration? I can know nothing of this by myself. It doth exist wherefore it hath ever existed, that is clear. But what idea can I have of an infinite power? How can I conceive an infinity actually existing? How can I suppose that the supreme intelligence is in the vacuum? An infinity of extent is not the same as an infinity of duration. An infinity of duration is elapsed, the instant that I am speaking of it; it is certain, that I can add nothing to past duration, but I can always add to that space which

I conceive, in the same manner that I can add to the numbers that I conceive. Infinity in numbers and extent is beyond the sphere of my understanding. All that can be said can give me no insight into this abyss. I happily feel that my difficulties and my ignorance can be no way pernicious to morality; we may very well be incapable of perceiving neither immensity of space replenished, nor infinite power which has created every thing, and which may nevertheless be still able to perform; this will only serve to prove still more the weakness of our understanding; and this weakness will render us only more submissive to the eternal Being, whose work we are.

XIX. MY DEPENDENCE.

We are his work. This is an important truth for us to know; for to know philosophically at what time he made man, what he did before, if he exists materially, or in vacuum, if he is at one point. if he constantly acts or not, if he acts everywhere, if he acts without or within himself; these are researches which strengthen the conviction of my profound ignorance.

I even see that there has been scarce a dozen men in Europe who have written upon these abstracted things with any kind of method; and if I could suppose that they had spoken in an intelligible manner, what would be the consequence? We have already found (No. IV.) that things which so few persons

can flatter themselves with understanding, are useless to the rest of mankind. We certainly are the work of God, this is useful for me to know; and the proof is also clear. All things in my body are causes and effects; that is, spring, pulley, moving power, hydraulic machine, equilibrium of fluids, and chemical laboratory. It is therefore arranged by an intelligence, (No. XV.) I am not indebted for this arrangement to the intelligence of my parents, for they certainly did not know what they did when they produced me: they were only the blind instruments of this eternal manufacturer, who animates the worm of the earth, and makes the sun turn upon its own axis.

XX. ETERNITY AGAIN.

Born from seed, produced by other seed, has there been a continual succession, an unfolding without end of these seeds, and has all nature ever existed by a necessary succession from that Supreme Being, who existed of himself? If I were to believe only my feeble understanding, I should say, it seems to me, that nature has always been animated. I cannot conceive that the cause which continually and visibly actuates her, being at all times able to act, has not always acted. An eternity of idleness in the active and necessary being, appears to me incompatible. I am inclined to believe, that the world has ever issued from that primitive and necessary cause, as

light emanates from the sun. By what a concatenation of ideas do I find myself led to believe the works of the eternal being eternal? My conception pusillanimous as it is, has strength enough to rise to a being necessarily existing by himself; but has not the strength to conceive nought. The existence of a single atom proves to me the eternity of existence, but nothing proves to me a mere void. What? is that space filled that was once a vacuum? This appears absurd and contradictory. I cannot allow of this nothing, this void, unless revelation assists me in fixing my ideas, which carry me beyond time.

I am sensible that an infinite succession of beings without origin, is equally absurd: this is the opinion of Samuel Clarke: but he does not undertake to affirm that God has not held this chain from all eternity; he dare not say that it was impossible for a Being eternally active, so long to display his works. It is evident that he could, and if he could, who will be bold enough to tell me that he did not? I say, once more, that nothing but revelation can teach me the contrary. But we have not yet attained that revelation which destroys all philosophy, that light before which all other lights are eclipsed.

XXI. MY DEPENDENCE AGAIN.

This eternal being, this universal cause, gives me my ideas; for I don't receive them from objects. Unshaped matter cannot com-

municate any thoughts to me; my thoughts do not come from myself, for they occur against my will, and frequently escape the same. We know very well there is no resemblance, no connection between objects, our ideas, and sensations. There was certainly something sublime in that Mallebranche, who dared to imagine that we see everything in God himself. But was there not something sublime in the Stoics, who thought that God acted within us, and that we possess a ray of his substance? Where shall we find truth between the dreams of Mallebranche and the Stoics? I sink again (No. II.) into ignorance, which is the appendage of our nature, and I adore that God by whom I think, without knowing how I think.

XXII. A FRESH DOUBT.

Convinced by my small share of reason, that there is a necessary eternal Being, from whom I receive my ideas, without being able to divine how or wherefore, I ask what is this being? If it hath the form of those intelligent and active species superior to ours in other globes? I have already said I knew nothing of the matter (No. I.) Nevertheless, I cannot affirm it to be impossible; for I perceive planets very superior to ours in extent, surrounded with more satellites than the earth. It is not improbable that they may be peopled with intelligences far superior to me, with bodies more robust, more active and more durable.

But their existence having no connection with mine, I shall leave it to the poets of antiquity, to make Venus descend from her imaginary third heaven, and Mars from the fifth. My enquiries should be confined to the action of the Being necessarily presiding over myself.

XXIII. A SOLE SUPREME ARTIST.

A great part of mankind observing the physical and moral evil diffused through this globe, imagined there were two powerful beings, one of which produced all the good, and the other all the evil. If they existed they were necessary; they therefore necessarily existed in the same place; there is no reason that what exists by its own nature should be excluded any place; they therefore penetrated each other—this is absurd. The idea of these two powerful enemies can derive its origin only from examples that strike us upon earth; we there observe gentle and ferocious men, useful and obnoxious animals, good masters and tyrants. There were two opposite powers devised, who presided over nature; this is only an Asiatic romance. There is throughout nature a manifest unity of design; the laws of motion and gravity are invariable; it is impossible that two supreme artists, in opposition to each other, could have followed the same laws. This alone has, in my opinion, overturned the Manichean system, and voluminous writings are superfluous to explode it.

There is then a sole eternal Power, to whom

everything is united, on whom all depends; but whose nature is to me incomprehensible. St. Thomas tells us, "That God is a pure act, a form that has neither gender nor predicament, that he is nature and the agent, that he exists essentially, participatively, and noncupatively." When the Dominicans were masters of the inquisition, they would have burnt a man who would have denied these fine things—I should not have denied them, but I should not have understood them.

I am told that God is simple; I acknowledge that I do not understand any more the value of this word. It is true, that I should not attribute to him gross parts that I could separate; but I cannot conceive that the principal and master of all that is in the extent, should not be in the extent. Simplicity, strictly speaking, appears to me to resemble too much a nonentity. The extreme weakness of my understanding has no instrument nice enough to lay hold of this simplicity. Shall I be told that the mathematical point is simple; but the mathematical point does not really exist.

It is again said that an idea is simple, but I do not understand this a whit better. I perceive a horse, I have the idea of it, but I see in him only an assemblage of things. I see a color, I have the idea of color; but this color is extent. I pronounce the abstracted names of color in general; of vice, virtue, truth, in general; but the reason is, that I have had a knowledge of things colored, of things that have appeared to me virtuous or vicious, true

or false. I express all this by a word; but I have no clear knowledge of simplicity. I know no more of it than I do of an infinity in numbers actually existing.

I am already convinced that not knowing what I am, I cannot know what is my author. I am every instant overwhelmed with my ignorance, and I console myself by incessantly reflecting that it is of no consequence to me to know, whether my master is or not in the extent, provided I do nothing against that conscience he has given me. Of all the systems which men have invented upon the Divinity, which, then, shall I embrace? Not one, without it be that of adorning him.

XXIV. SPINOZA.

After being immersed with Thales in the water, of which his first principle consisted; after glowing before Empedocles's fire; after running in a straight line in the vacuum, with Epicurus's atoms; after having calculated numbers with Pythagoras, and heard his music; after having paid my respect to the Androgines of Plato, and having passed through all the regions of metaphysics and madness; I was at length desirous of being acquainted with the system of Spinoza.

He is not new; he has imitated some ancient Greek philosophers, and even some Jews; but Spinoza has done what no Greek philosopher, and much less a Jew, ever did. He has used an imposing geometrical method to calculate

the net produce of his ideas. Let us see if he has not methodically wandered with the thread that conducts him.

He at first establishes a clear and incontestable fact. There is something, consequently there has eternally existed a necessary Being. This principle is so true, that the profound Samuel Clarke has availed himself of it, to prove the existence of God.

This Being must be found in all places where there is existence; for who can limit it?

This necessary being is then everything that exists: wherefore there is only one substance in the universe.

This substance cannot create another; for as it fills everything, where can a new substance be placed, and how can something be created from nothing? How can extent be created without placing it in extent itself, which necessarily exists?

There are in the world thought and matter; that necessary substance which we call God is therefore thought and matter. All thought and all matter are then comprehended in the immensity of God; there can be nothing out of him; they can only act within him; he comprehends everything, he is everything.

Wherefore everything we call different substances is, in fact, nothing but the universality of the different attributes of the Supreme Being, who thinks in the brain of man, enlightens in the light, moves upon the winds, darts in the lightning, revolves in the planets,

and exists in all nature.

He is not like a vile king of the earth confined to his place, separated from his subjects; he is intimately united with them; they are essential parts of himself; if he were distinguished from them he would be no longer universal, he would not fill all space, he would be a side being like another.

Though all the variable modifications in the universe are the effect of his attributes, nevertheless, according to Spinoza, he hath no parts; for, says he, Infinity has none, properly speaking. In fine, Spinoza pronounces that we must love this necessary, infinite, eternal God. These are his words (p. 45, Edit. of 1731.)

"With regard to the love of God, this idea is so far from weakening it, that I think no other is so fit to increase it, since it teaches me that God is intimate with my being, that he gives me existence and all my properties,—that he gives them to me liberally, without reproach, without interest, without subjecting me to anything but my own nature. It banishes fear, uneasiness, difference, and all the defects of a mean and sordid love. **It teaches** me that it is a good I cannot lose, and which I the more advantageously possess, as I know and love it."

These ideas seduced many readers; there were even some, who having at first written against him, afterwards embraced his opinion.

The learned Bayle is upbraided with having severely attacked Spinoza, without under-

standing him. Severely, I agree to; but I do not think unjustly. He easily discovered the weak side of this enchanted castle: he saw that Spinoza, in fact, composed his God of parts, though he found himself compelled to retract, terrified at his own system. Bayle saw his frenzy in making God a star and a pumpkin, thought and smoke, beating and beaten. He saw that this fable is much beneath that of Proteus. Perhaps Bayle should have confined himself to the word modalities, and not parts, as Spinoza always makes use of the word modalities. But if I am not mistaken, it is equally impertinent, whether the excrement of an animal is a modality or a part of the Supreme Being.

He did not indeed attack the reason by which Spinoza maintains the impossibility of the creation; but the reason is, that the creation, properly speaking, is an object of faith, and not of philosophy: because this opinion is no way peculiar to Spinoza, and all antiquity have thought like him. He attacks only the absurd idea of a simple God, composed of parts, of a God that eats and digests himself, who loves and hates the same thing at the same time, etc. Spinoza constantly makes use of the word God, and Bayle takes him according to his own expressions.

But at the bottom, Spinoza does not acknowledge any God; he has probably made use of this expression, he has said that we should serve and love God, only that he might not startle mankind. He appears to be an atheist,

according to the full extent of the epithet; he is not such an atheist as Epicurus, who acknowledged useless and lazy gods; he is not like the greater part of the Greeks and Romans, who ridiculed the gods of the vulgar; he is such, because he acknowledges no providence whatever, because he admits only of eternity, immensity, and the necessity of things; like Stratonius, like Diagoras; he does not doubt like Pyrrha, he affirms, and what does he affirm? That there is only a single substance, that there cannot be two, that this substance is extended and pendant, and this is what none of the Greek or Asiatic philosophers ever said, as they admitted of a universal soul.

He nowhere mentions in his book specified designs, which are manifested in all beings. He does not examine whether eyes were made to see with, ears to hear, feet to walk, or wings to fly; he neither considers the laws of motion in animals and plants, nor their structure adapted to those laws, any more than the depth of mathematics, which governs the course of the stars: he is afraid to perceive that everything which exists attests a divine providence; he does not rise from effects to their cause, but immediately placing himself at the head of the origin of things, he builds his romance in the same manner as Descartes constructed his, upon a supposition. He supposes, with Descartes, a plenum, though it has been strictly demonstrated that all motion is impossible in a plenum. This was his princi-

pal reason for looking upon the universe as one single substance. He was the dupe to his geometrical genius. How came it that Spinoza, who could not doubt that spirit and matter existed, did not at least examine whether providence had not arranged everything? How came it that he did not give a single glance towards those springs, those means, each of which hath its design, and enquired whether they evinced a supreme artist? He must either have been a very ignorant physician, or a sophist swelled up with a very stupid kind of pride, not to acknowledge a providence every time he breathed and felt his heart beat; for this respiration and this motion of the heart are the effects of a machine so industriously complicated and arranged with such powerful art, depending upon so many springs, all concurring to the same end, that is impossible to be imitated, and impossible for a man of good sense not to admire it.

The modern Spinozists reply, Do not terrify yourselves at these consequences, which you impute to us; we find, as you do, a succession of admirable effects in the organized bodies, and in all nature. The eternal cause is in the eternal intelligence, which we admit, and which, with matter, constitutes the universality of things, which is God. There is but one single substance, which acts by the same modality of its thought upon the modality of matter, and which thus constitutes the universe, which forms but one whole inseparable thing.

To this reply we answer: How can you prove to us, that the thought which gives motion to the stars, which animates man, which doth everything, can be a modality, and that the excrements of a toad and a worm should be a modality of the same sovereign Being? Will you dare to say that so strange a principle is demonstrated to you? Do you not cloak your ignorance beneath words that you do not understand? Bayle has thoroughly unfolded the sophisms of your master in all the windings and all the obscurities of the style of a pretended and really much confused geometrician, which is that of his master. I refer you to him; philosophers should not exclaim against Bayle.

Be this as it may, I shall observe of Spinoza, that he very honestly deceived himself. It seems to me, he did not suppress in his system those ideas which might be troublesome to him, only because he was too full of his own; he went on in his own road, without observing anything that might interrupt him, and this is what very often happens to us. Moreover, he inverted all the principles of morality, though he was himself a rigid moralist; so particularly sober, that he scarce drank a pint of wine a month; so disinterested as to transfer to the heirs of the unfortunate John de Wit a pension of two hundred florins, which this great man had granted him: so generous as to give away his fortune; ever patient in his illness and in his property, ever consistent in his conduct.

Bayle, who has so ill treated him, had nearly the same character. Each of them sought after truth all their lives by different roads. Spinoza frames a specious system in some respects, and very erroneous in the foundation. Bayle has combated all systems: what became of their writings? They have prevented the idleness of some readers, and this is the full scope of all writing; and from Thales, down to the professors of our universities, and the most chimerical reasoners, as well as their plagiarists, no one philosopher has influenced the manner of the very street he lived in. What is the reason? Because men are led by custom, not by metaphysics.

XXV. ABSURDITIES.

There are many voyages made in unknown countries productive of no advantage. I am in the situation of a man, who having wandered upon the ocean, and perceiving the Maldivian Islands with which the sea of India is interspersed, is desirous of visiting them all. My long voyage has been of no avail to me; let me see if I can reap any benefit by my observations upon these little islands, which seem only to interrupt the passage.

In a hundred courses of philosophy, such things are explained to me, of which nobody can frame the least idea. By this I am taught to comprehend the Trinity physically; it says that it resembles three dimensions of matter. Go on, and so will I. That pretends to com-

municate to me transubstantiation by the touch, by showing me according to the laws of motion, how an accident may exist without a subject, and how one single body may be in two places at the same time. I shut my ears, and retire with still greater precipitation.

Pascal, Blaise Pascal himself, the author of the Provincial Letters, utters these words: "Do you believe that it is impossible that God may be infinite and without parts? I will then show you a thing indivisible and infinite; this is a point moving everywhere with infinite swiftness, for it is in every place, and everywhere, quite entire."

A mathematical point that moves of itself! just heaven! a point that exists nowhere but in the head of a geometrician, which is everywhere at the same time, of infinite swiftness, as if actual infinite swiftness could exist! Every word is frenzy and he was a great man that uttered these frenzies!

Your soul, says another, is simple, incorporeal, intangible; and, as no body can touch, I shall prove, according to the physics of Albert the Great, that it will be physically burnt, if you are not of my opinion: this is the way I prove it to you *a priori*, in strengthening Albert with the syllogisms of Abeli.

I reply to him, I do not understand his *priori*; that I think his compliment is very harsh; that revelation, which we have nothing to do with, can alone teach me a thing so incomprehensible; that I allow him to differ

from me in opinion, without threatening him: and I get a good distance from him for fear of an accident, for he seems to be a dangerous man.

A multitude of sophists of all countries overwhelm me with unintelligible arguments upon the nature of things; upon my own, upon my past, present and future state. If one talks to them of eating and clothing, lodging, the necessaries of life, money by which they are procured, they are perfectly conversant in these things; are there a few pistoles to be got, each of them is eager to obtain them, and they do not make a mistake of a farthing; but when the question is concerning our being, they have not one clear idea about it. Common sense deserts them. From hence I return to my first conclusion (No. IV.) that what cannot be of universal use, what is not within the reach of common men, what is not understood by those who have most exercised their faculty of thinking, is not necessary to mankind.

XXVI. OF THE BEST OF WORLDS.

In my various peregrinations in search of instruction, I met with some disciples of Plato. Come along with me, said one of them, you are in the best of worlds; we have far surpassed our master. There were in his time only five possible worlds, because there are but five regular bodies; but now there are an infinity of possible universes; God has chosen the best;

come and you will be satisfied with it.

I humbly replied, The worlds which God might create, were either better, perfectly equal, or inferior. He could not choose the worst. Those which were equal, supposing such to be, could have no preference; they were ever completely the same; there could have been no choice amongst them; to fix upon one or the other was just the same. It was therefore impossible that he could avoid choosing the best. But how could the others be possible, when it is impossible they can exist?

He made some very curious distinctions, incessantly assuring me, without knowing what he said, that this world is the best of all really possible worlds. But being just then tortured with the stone, which gave me an almost insupportable pain, the citizens of the best of worlds conducted me to the neighboring hospital. In the way two of these perfectly happy inhabitants were carried off by two creatures of their own likeness. They were loaded with irons, the one for debt, the other upon mere suspicion.

I know not whether I was conducted into one of the best possible hospitals; but I was crowded amongst two or three thousand wretches like myself. Here were many defenders of their country, who informed me, that they had been trepanned and dissected alive; that they had had arms and legs cut off; and that many thousand of their generous fellow-countrymen had been massacred in one

of the thirty battles fought in the last war, which is about the hundredth million war since we have been acquainted with wars.

One might also meet in this house about a thousand persons of both sexes, who resembled hideous spectres, and who were rubbed with a certain metal, because they had followed the law of nature, and nature had, I know not how, taken the precaution of poisoning in them the source of life. I thanked my two conductors.

After a very sharp iron had been thrust into my bladder, and some stones were extracted from this quarry,—when I was cured, and I had no further complaints than a few disagreeable pains for the rest of my days, I made my representations to my guides.

I took the liberty of telling them there was some good in this world, as the surgeons had extracted four flints from my torn entrails; but that I would much rather that bladders had been lanterns than quarries. I spoke to them of the innumerable calamities and crimes that were dispersed over this excellent world.

The boldest of the two, who was a German and my countryman, told me that all this was a mere trifle.

Heaven was peculiarly propitious to man when Tarquin violated Lucretia and she stabbed herself, because the tyrants were thereupon driven out, and rapes, suicides and war laid the foundation of a republic which conferred happiness upon those they vanquished.

I had some difficulty in agreeing to this hap-

piness. I did not immediately conceive the felicity of the Gauls and Spaniards, of whom it is said Caesar put three millions to the sword.

Devastation and rapine appeared to me things somewhat disagreeable, but the defender of optimism did not quit his hold; he persevered in telling me, like Don Carlos's jailer, "Peace, peace, it is for your good."

Having, however, at length run him pretty hard, he said, that "we should not consider this mere globule, where every thing is jarring; but that in the star Sirius, in Orion, the Ox's-Eye and elsewhere, everything is perfect."

"Let us, then, go thither," said I.

A little theologian then took me by the arm. He told me, in confidence, that "those folks were very dreamers; that it was not in the least necessary that there should be any evil upon earth; that it was expressly formed that there never should be any thing but good; and in order to prove this, you must know that things formerly went on in this manner in Eden for ten or twelve days."

"Alas!" I replied to him, "it is a great pity, reverend father, that things did not continue so."

XXVI. OF MONADS.

The same German then laid hold of me again. He tutored me, and clearly taught me the nature of my soul.

"Every thing in nature," said he, "consists

of monads. Your soul is a monad, and as it is united with all the others, it necessarily has ideas of all that passes in them. These ideas are confused, which is very necessary; and your monad, as well as mine, is a concentric mirror of the universe.

"But believe not that you act in consequence of your thoughts. There is a pre-established harmony between the monad of your soul and the monads of your body, so that when your soul hath an idea, your body has a motion, without the one being the result of the other. They are two pendulums that go together; or, if you will, the one resembles a man who preaches, whilst another makes gesticulations. You easily conceive that this must necessarily be so in the best of worlds; for—

XXVIII. OF PLASTIC FORMS

As I have no comprehension of these admirable ideas, an Englishman, named Cudworth, discovered my ignorance and my embarrassment by my fixed eyes and downcast look.

"These ideas," he said, "appear deep to you, because they are well sifted. I will give you a concise notion of the manner in which nature acts. First, there is nature in general, then, there are plastic natures, which form all animals and all plants.—You understand me?"

"Not a word, Sir."

"Let us go on then."—

"A plastic nature is not a corporeal faculty;

it is an immaterial substance, which acts without knowing what it does, being entirely blind and insensible to reason and to vegetation. But the tulip has its plastic form, which makes it vegetate; the dog has also its plastic form, which makes it pursue the chase, and man has his, which makes him reason. These forms are immediate agents of the divinity. There are no ministers in the world more faithful; for they yield everything, and keep nothing for themselves.

"You see very well that these are the true principles of things, and that plastic natures are at least equal to pre-established harmony and monads, which are the concentrical mirror of the universe." I acknowledged to him that the one was as good as the other.

XXIX. OF LOCKE.

After so many unfortunate excursions, fatigued, harrassed, ashamed of having sought after so many truths, and found so many chimeras, I returned to Locke, like the prodigal son who returned to his father. I threw myself into the arms of a modest man, who never pretends to know what he is really ignorant of; who, in fact, is not possessed of immense riches, but whose security is always good, and who enjoys the most permanent wealth without ostentation.

He confirms me in the opinion I always entertained, that nothing obtains a place in our understanding but through our senses:

That there are no innate ideas:

That we can neither have the ideas of infinite space nor infinite number:

That I do not always think, and consequently that thought is not the essence, but the action of my understanding.

That I am free when I can do what I please:

That this liberty does not consist in my will, since when I remain voluntarily in my chamber, the door of which is locked, without my having the key, I am not at liberty to go out; as I suffer when I am not willing to suffer; as I frequently cannot recall my ideas when I am disposed to recall them.

It is, therefore, in fact, absurd to say that the will is free, as it is absurd to say, I will such a thing; for this is precisely as if one were to say, I desire to desire it, I fear to fear it. In a word, the will is no more free than it is blue or square. (See Article XIII.)

That I can only form a will in consequence of ideas received in my brain; that I am necessitated to determine in consequence of those ideas, as I should otherwise determine without reason, which would be an effect without a cause:

That I cannot have a positive idea of infinity, as I am absolutely finite.

That I cannot know any substance, as I can have no ideas but of their qualities, and that a thousand qualities of a thing cannot communicate the intimate nature of this thing, which may possess a hundred thousand other qualities that I am unacquainted with:

That I am no longer the same person after I have lost my memory; for not having the smallest part of my body which belonged to me in my infancy, and not having the least remembrance of the ideas that affected me at that age, it is clear that I am no longer that same child any more than I am Confucius or Zoroaster.

I am reputed the same person by those who have observed me grow, and who have always resided with me; but I have in no respect the same existence; I am no longer my former self; I am a new identity; and what singular consequences must hence arise!

That, in fine, agreeable to my profound ignorance, of which I am convinced, according to the principles of things, it is impossible that I can know what are the substances to which God designs to grant the gifts of feeling and thinking. In fact, are there any substances the essence of which is to think, that always think, and which think by themselves? In this case these substances, whatever they be, are gods; for they have no occasion for the eternal Being and Creator, as they possess their essences without him—as they think without him.

Secondly.—If the eternal Being has communicated the gifts of feeling and thinking to these beings, he has given them what did not essentially belong to them; he could therefore have given this faculty to all beings whatever.

Thirdly.—We are unacquainted with the inward recesses of any being; wherefore it is

impossible for us to know whether a being is susceptible or insusceptible of sensation and thought.

The words matter and spirit are mere words. We have no complete idea of these two things. Wherefore, in fact, it would be as bold to say that a body organized by God himself cannot receive thought from God himself, as it would be ridiculous to urge that spirit could not think.

Fourthly.—I imagine there are substances purely spiritual, which never had any idea of matter and motion; would it be thought proper for them to deny that matter and motion may exist?

I suppose that the learned congregation who condemned Galileo for impiety and absurdity—for having demonstrated the motion of the earth round the sun, had obtained some knowledge of the ideas of chancellor Bacon, who proposed to examine whether attraction be given to matter. I suppose that he who made the report of this great tribunal remonstrated to these great personages, that there were people mad enough to suspect that God could communicate to all matter from Saturn down to our little lump of earth, a tendency towards a center,—attraction, gravitation,—which would be absolutely independent of all impulse; as impulse acts upon surfaces, and this gravitation actuates solids.

Do you not find these judges of human reason, and of God himself, immediately dictate their sentences, anathematize this gravitation,

(which Newton has since demonstrated,) pronounce it impossible for God to perform, and that gravitation towards a center is blasphemy?

I am, methinks, guilty of the same temerity, when I dare aver that God cannot make any organized being whatever feel and think.

Fifthly.—I cannot doubt that God has granted sensations of the memory, and consequently ideas, to the organized matter in animals. Wherefore, then, should I deny that he may make the same present to other animals? It has already been observed, that the difficulty consists less in knowing whether organized matter can think, than in knowing how any being whatever can think.

Thought is something divine; yes, doubtless, and therefore I never shall know what a thinking being is. The principal motion is divine; I shall never know the cause of this motion, the laws whereof all my members execute.

Aristotle's child being at nurse, attracted into his mouth the nipple which he sucked, forming with his tongue, which he drew in, a pneumatic machine, pumping the air, and causing a vacuum: whilst his father, quite ignorant of this, said at random, that "nature abhors a vacuum."

The child of Hippocrates, at four years of age, proved the circulation of the blood by passing his finger over his hand; and Hippocrates did not know that the blood circulated.

We are all, great as we may be, like those children; we perform admirable things, and

there is not a single philosopher who knows how they are done.

Sixthly.—These are the reasons, or rather the doubts, produced by my intellectual faculty upon Locke's modest assertion. Once more, I do not say that it is matter which thinks within us. I say with Locke, that it does not belong to us to assert that it should be impossible for God to make matter think; that it is absurd to declare it; and that it is not for worms of the earth to limit the power of the Supreme Being.

Seventhly.—I add that this question is absolutely foreign to morality: because whether matter can, or cannot think, whoever thinks must be just; because the atom to which God shall have given thought may be worthy or unworthy, be punished or recompensed, and exist eternally, as well as the unknown being formerly called *breath* and at present *spirit*, of which we have a less idea than even an atom.

I know very well that those who thought the being called *breath* could alone be susceptible of feeling and thinking, have persecuted those who have followed the sagacious Locke, and who have not dared to limit the power of God to animating only this *breath*. But when the whole universe believed that the soul was a light body, a *breath*, a substance of fire, would it have been just to persecute those who came to teach us that the soul is immaterial?

All the fathers of the church who thought the soul an extended body, would they have

done right to persecute the other fathers who communicated to man the idea of perfect immateriality?

No, doubtless; because a persecutor is an abominable character. Wherefore those who allow of perfect immateriality, without comprehending it, should have tolerated those who rejected it, because they did not comprehend it.

Those who have refused God the power of animating the unknown being called matter, should also have tolerated those who have not dared to divest God of his power; for it is very scandalous to hate one another for syllogisms.

XXX. WHAT HAVE I THUS FAR LEARNED.

I have then reckoned with Locke and with myself, and I find myself possessed of four or five truths, abstracted from a hundred errors, and loaded with an immense quantity of doubts. I said to myself afterwards,—These few truths which I have acquired by my reason, will be but barren land in my hands, if I can find no principle of morality in them. It is very fit for such an insignificant animal as man to raise himself up to the knowledge of the master of nature. But this will be of no more service to me than the science of algebra, if I do not derive from it some rule for the conduct of my life.

XXXI. IS THERE ANY MORALITY.

The more I have observed men differ by climate, manners, languages, laws, doctrine, and the measure of their understanding, the more I have observed they have the same fund of morality. They have all a barbarous notion of justice and injustice, without knowing a word of theology. They have all acquired this notion at an age when reason begins to unfold itself: as they have naturally acquired the art of raising burdens with poles, and passing a rivulet upon a piece of wood, without having learned the mathematics.

It therefore appeared to me that this idea of justice and injustice was necessary for them, because they all agreed in this point, as soon as they could act and reason.

The supreme intelligence which formed us has then been pleased that there should be justice upon earth, that we might live there for a certain time.

It appears to me, that having neither instinct to nourish ourselves like animals, nor natural arms like them, and vegetating for several years in the imbecility of infancy, exposed to every danger, the few men that would have escaped from the jaws of ferocious animals, from famine and misery, would have been employed in wrangling for a little nourishment and a few skins of animals; and they would have been destroyed like the children of the dragon of Cadmus, as soon as they would

have been able to have used any arms.

At least, there would have been no society, if men had not conceived the idea of some justice, which is the tie of all society.

How would the Egyptians, who raised pyramids and obelisks, and the wandering Scythians, who were even unacquainted with a cabin, have had the same fundamental notions of justice and injustice, if God had not given to each of them, from the beginning of time, that reason which, in unfolding itself, made them perceive the same necessary principles, in the same manner as he gave them affections and passions, which having attained the degree of their development, necessarily perpetuate in the same manner the race of the Scythian and the Egyptian?

I perceive a barbarous, ignorant, superstitious herd, a bloody and a furious people, who had not even a term in their jargon to signify geometry and astronomy. This people hath nevertheless, the same fundamental laws as the wise Chaldean, who was acquainted with the course of the stars, and the Phenician, still more learned, who availed himself of the knowledge of the stars to go and lay the foundation of colonies at the extremity of the hemisphere, where the ocean mingles with the Mediterranean. All these people aver that they should respect their father and mother; that perjury, calumny, and homicide are abominable crimes: they therefore derive the same consequences from the same principles of their unfolded reason.

XXXII. REAL UTILITY. THE NOTION
OF JUSTICE.

The notion of something just, appears to me so natural, so universally received by all men, that it is independent of all law, of all compact, of all religion.

Let me ask a Turk, a Guebrian or a Malabar, for the money I lent him, to enable him to eat and clothe himself, and he will never think of replying: "Wait till I learn if Mahomet, Zoroaster, or Brama commands me to restore your money."

He will acknowledge that it is just that he should pay me, and if he doth not perform it, either his poverty, or his avarice, predominates over the justice which he acknowledges.

I assert it as a fact, that there are no people who maintain, that it is either just, right, proper, or honest, to refuse nourishment to one's father or mother, when it is practicable to bestow it.

That no community has ever considered calumny as a good action, not even a sect of bigoted fanatics.

The idea of justice appears to me so much a truth of the first order, to which the whole universe has given its assent, that the greatest crimes which afflict society are all committed under the false pretence of justice. The greatest of all crimes, at least that which is the most destructive, and consequently the most opposite to the design of nature, is war;

but there never was an aggressor who did not gloss over his guilt with the pretext of justice.

The Roman depredators had all their invasions declared just, by priests named Fecials.

Every free-booter, who finds himself at the head of an army, begins his foray by a manifesto, and implores the God of armies.

Petty thieves themselves, when united in a society, take care not to say, "let us go and rob, let us go and despoil the widow and the orphan of their scanty pittance," but they say, "let us be just, let us recover our fortune from the hands of the rich, who have deprived us of it."

They have even a dictionary among them, which has been printed since the sixteenth century, and in this vocabulary, which they call Argot, the words theft, robbery, rapine, are not to be met with. They make use of terms which correspond with gaining, reimbursing, etc.

The word injustice is never uttered in a council of state, where the most unjust murder is proposed. Even the most bloody conspirators have never said, "let us commit a crime." They have ever said, "Avenge our country for the crimes of a tyrant; let us punish what appears to us unjust."

In a word, servile flatterers, barbarous ministers, odious conspirators, the most infamous robbers, all pay homage against their will, to that virtue they trample upon.

I have been greatly astonished that amongst the French, who are enlightened and polished, maxims have been repeated upon the stage which are equally as shocking as false.

La justice et le droit font des vaines idees,
Le droit des rois consiste a rien epargner.

"Justice and right are vain ideas, the right of kings consists in sparing nothing."

And this abominable speech is put in the mouth of Phocian, minister to young Ptolemy. But it is precisely because he is a minister that he should say the contrary; he should represent the death of Pompey as a necessary and just misfortune.

I believe, then, that the ideas just and unjust, are as clear and universal as the ideas of health and sickness, truth and falsehood, convenience and inconvenience.

The limits of justice and injustice are very difficult to fix; as the middle state between health and disease, between the convenience and the inconvenience of things, between falsehood and truth, is difficult to specify. They are shades that are interwoven; but glaring colors strike every eye.

For example, all men agree that we should restore what we have borrowed; but if I know that the person to whom I am indebted two millions will make use of it to enslave my country, should I put such fatal arms into his hands? Here are sentiments that are divided; but in general I should observe my oath when no evil results from it. This is what no one ever doubted.

XXXIII. IS UNIVERSAL CONSENT A
PROOF OF TRUTH.

It may be objected that the consent of men at all times, and in all countries, is not a proof of truth. All people believed in the Magi, in sorcery, demons, apparitions, planetary influence, and a hundred other such like follies. Might it not be the same with respect to justice and injustice?

It appears to me not. First, it is false that all men believed these chimeras. They were, in fact, aliment to the weakness of the vulgar; but a great number of sages constantly ridiculed them. These numerous wise men, on the contrary, always admitted of justice and injustice, as much and even more than the people.

The belief in sorcerers, demons, etc., is far from being necessary to mankind; the belief in justice is absolutely necessary, because it is an unfolding of that reason given by God; and the idea of sorcerers, people possessed, etc., is on the contrary, a perversion of this same reason.

XXXIV. AGAINST LOCKE.

Locke, who instructs and teaches me to mistrust myself, does he not sometimes impose upon himself like many others? He wants to prove the falsity of innate ideas; but does he not add a very bad reason to several good

ones? He acknowledges it is not just to boil one's neighbor in a cauldron and eat him. He nevertheless says there have been nations of Anthropophagi; and that these thinking beings would not have eaten men, if they had possessed the ideas of justice and injustice, which I suppose is necessary for the preservation of the human species. (See No. XXXVI.)

Without entering into a disquisition, whether there were in fact any nations of Anthropophagi,—without examining the relations of the traveler Dampier, who traversed all America, and who never saw any, but who, on the contrary, was received amongst all the savages with the greatest humanity: I reply as follows:

Conquerors have eaten their slaves taken in war. They imagine they did a very just action. They imagined they had a right over their life and death; and, as they had but few good meats for their table, they thought they were allowed to feed upon the fruit of their victory.

They were in this more just than the Romans, who, without reaping any advantages, strangled the captive princes that were chained to their triumphal cars.

The Romans and the savages had a very false idea of justice, I allow; but they, however, both thought they acted justly. And this is so true, that the same savages, when they had admitted these captives into their society, looked upon them as their children; and the same ancient Romans have given a thousand examples of admirable justice.

XXXV. AGAINST LOCKE.

I agree with the sagacious Locke, that there is no innate idea—no innate principle of practice. This is such an incontrovertible truth, that it is evident that all children would have a clear notion of God if they were born with this idea, and all men would then agree with this same notion—an agreement that has never been known.

It is also evident that we are not born with innate principles of morality, as we do not see how a whole nation could reject a principle of morality which had been engraven on the heart of every individual of that nation.

I suppose that we are all born with the moral principle well understood, that no person should be persecuted for his manner of thinking. How could whole communities become persecutors? I suppose that every man carries within himself that evident law whereby he is commanded to be faithful to his oath. How could all men, united in a body, have enacted that no faith should be kept with heretics?

I repeat again, that instead of these chimerical innate ideas, God has given us reason, which is strengthened with age, and which teaches us all, when we are attentive without prejudice, that there is a God, and that we should be just. But I cannot grant Locke the consequences he draws from thence. He seems to approach too near Hobbes' system,

though, in fact, he is very distant from it.

These are his words in the first book of his *Essay upon the Human Understanding*.

"View but an army at the sacking of a town, and see what sense of moral principles, or what touch of conscience they exhibit for all the outrages they do."

No, they have no remorse, and why? Because they believe they act justly.

Not one amongst them imagines the cause of the Prince for whom they are fighting to be unjust. They risk their life for their cause—they fulfill the bargain they have made. They might have been killed in the assault, they therefore think they have a right to kill; they might have been plundered, they therefore think they may plunder.

Add to this, that they are intoxicated with fury, which does not reason. And to convince you that they have not divested themselves of the idea of justice and honesty, propose to these same soldiers much more money than the plunder of the city, handsomer women than those they have violated, upon condition only that instead of murdering in their rage three or four thousand enemies, who still make resistance, and who may kill them, they go and cut the throats of their king, his chancellor, his secretaries of state, and his high almoner, you will not find a single soldier who does not reject your proposal with horror: and yet you propose but six murders, instead of four thousand, and you present them with a very valuable recompense.

Why do they refuse you? Because they think it is just to kill four thousand enemies; but the murder of their sovereign, to whom they are bound by a solemn oath, appears to them abominable.

Locke continues his argument, and to prove the better that no rule of conduct is innate, he speaks of the Mengrelians, who out of sport, he says, bury their children alive; and of the Caribbees, who fatten them, in order to eat them.

It has already been observed that this great man was too credulous in relating these fables. Lambert, who alone imputes to the Mengrelians the interment of their children alive, through wantonness, is not an author of sufficient credit to be quoted.

Chardin, who passes for a traveler of veracity, and who was ransomed in Mengrelia, would have spoken of this horrible custom if it had existed; and his affirming it would not have been sufficient to give it credit. Twenty travelers of different nations and religions should agree to confirm such a strange custom, in order to obtain an historical certainty of it.

It is the same with the women of the Antilles Islands, who raised their children to eat them. This is not the nature of a mother. The human heart is not thus framed.

Amongst the wealthy and the great, who were perverted by the excesses of luxury and jealousy, the refinement was practiced of having eunuchs to wait upon and guard their

wives and concubines. Eunuchs were also in demand in Italy, and were employed at the Pope's Chapel, in order to have voices finer than those of women.

Locke's assertions regarding the saints of the Mahometan religion and their useful quadrupeds, should be placed with prince Maurice's story of the parrot, who kept up such a fine conversation in the Brazilian language, which Locke is simple enough to relate, without considering that the prince's interpreter may have related a joke to him.

In this manner the author of the *Spirit of Laws* amuses himself in quoting the imaginary laws of Tonquin, Bantam, Borneo, and Formosa, upon the report of some travelers, or romancers, or persons misinformed.

Locke and Montesquieu are two great men, in whom such simplicity appears to me inexcusable.

XXXVI. NATURE EVERYWHERE THE SAME.

In giving up Locke at this point, I say with the great Newton, *Natura est semper sibi consona*, Nature everywhere resembles herself. The law of gravitation, which acts upon a star, acts upon all stars, upon all matter. Thus the fundamental law of morality equally acts upon all civilized nations. There are a thousand differences in the interpretation of this law in a thousand circumstances; but the basis ever remains the same, and this basis is the

idea of justice and injustice. Innumerable acts of injustice are committed in the fury of passion, as reason is lost in drunkenness; but when the intoxication is over, reason returns; and this, in my opinion, is the only cause of human society subsisting,—a cause subordinate to the wants of each other's assistance.

How then have we acquired the idea of justice? As we acquired that of prudence, of truth, of conveniences, by sentiment and reason. It is impossible for us to avoid thinking it a very imprudent action for a man to throw himself into the fire, in order to be admired, and who should hope afterwards to escape injury. It is impossible for us to avoid thinking a man very unjust for killing another in his passion. Society is founded entirely upon these notions, which can never be torn from the heart, and it is for this reason that all society subsists, whatever extravagant and horrible superstition it may be subject to.

At what age are we acquainted with what is just and unjust? At the age when we know that two and two make four.

XXXVII. OF HOBBS.

Thou profound and extravagant philosopher, thou good citizen, thou enemy of Descartes, who deceivedst thyself like him, thou whose physical errors are great but pardonable, because thou camest before Newton, thou who hadst told truths that do not obliterate thy mistakes, thou who didst first display the chim

eras of innate ideas, thou who wert the fore-runner of Locke in many things, as well as of Spinoza, in vain dost thou astonish thy readers by almost succeeding to prove to them that there are no laws in the world but the laws of conventions; that there is no justice or injustice but what has been agreed upon as such in a country.

If thou hadst been alone with Cromwell in a desert island, and Cromwell would have killed thee for having been a partisan of thy king in the island of England, would not such an attempt appear to thee as unjust in thy new island as in thine own country?

Thou sayest in thy Law of Nature, "That every one having a right to all things, each has a right over the life of his own likenesses."

Dost thou not confound power with right?

Dost thou think that, in fact, power conveys right? and that a robust son has nothing to reproach himself with for having assassinated his old and decrepid father?

Whoever studies morality should begin by refuting thy book in his heart; but thine own heart refuted it still more; for thou wert virtuous as well as Spinoza,—and thou wert only wanting, like him, in teaching the principles of virtue, which thou didst practice and commend to others.

XXXVIII. UNIVERSAL MORALITY.

Morality appears to me so universal, so calculated by the universal Being that formed

us, so destined to serve as a counterpoise to our fatal passions, and to solace the inevitable troubles of this short life, that from Zoroaster down to Lord Shaftsbury, I find all philosophers teaching the same morality, though they have all different ideas upon the principles of things.

We find that Hobbes, Spinoza, and Bayle himself, who either denied the first principles, or at least doubted of them, have, nevertheless, strongly recommended justice, and all the virtues.

Every nation had peculiar religious rights, and very often absurd and revolting opinions in metaphysics and theology. But the point in question is to know whether we should be just. In this the whole universe agrees, as we said in No. XXXVI., and this statement cannot be too often repeated.

XXXIX. ZOROASTER.

I shall not examine at what time Zoroaster lived, whom the Persians allowed to have existed nine thousand years before them, as well as Plato and the ancient Athenians.

I find that his moral precepts, which were translated from the ancient language of the Magi into the vulgar language of the Guebrians, have been preserved till the present time; and it evidently appears, from the puerile allegories, the ridiculous observations, the fantastic ideas with which this collection is

filled, that the religion of Zoroaster is of the highest antiquity.

The word Garden is there used to express the recompence of the just; we there meet with the evil principle under the word Satan, which the Jews also adopted. We there find the world formed in six times or seasons. It is there commanded to recite an *abunavar* and an *ashim vuhu*, for those who sneeze.

But, in fine, in this collection of a hundred subjects or precepts taken from the book of *Zend*, and which the very words of the ancient Zoroaster are repeated, what moral duties are prescribed?

That of loving and succoring one's father and mother, that of giving alms to the poor, that of never breaking one's word, that of abstaining when doubtful whether the action to be performed is just or not. (Subject XXX)

I shall confine myself to this precept, because no legislator could ever go beyond it; and I am confirmed in the opinion that though Zoroaster established ridiculous superstitions in matters of doctrine, the purity of his morals proves that he was not corrupt, and that the more he gave way to errors in his dogmas, the more impossible was it for him to err in teaching virtue.

